1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
SA19 Talamanca SA19

574 visitor to be overwhelmed with little presents of food. I have been pre-
[431] sented within half an hour, in one house, with five calabashes of choco-
late, at least half-a-dozen quarts of chicha, a dozen or more ears of green
corn, and a dozen ripe bananas. The little boys, with whom I made
[123] friends, fared sumptuously, for it wasn't polite for me to refuse any-
thing.

342 The houses of the Bri-bris are usually circular, from thirty to fifty feet in diameter, and about the same in height. They are composed of long poles, reaching from the ground to the apex. These rest on a ring of withes or vines, tied in bundles, eight or ten inches thick, and resting on a series of upright crotched posts, set in the ground in a circle about a third smaller than the outer circumference of the house. Above this ring, if the house is large, are one or two more, according to its size, not resting on posts, but tied to the sloping poles. The whole is thickly thatched with palm leaves, and finished at the apex by an old earthen jar, to stop the leaks. There is but one aperture to the house, and this is a large, squarely cut door, left on one side. Over the door there is sometimes made a little shed, to keep the rain out. The interior is always very dark. Sometimes, among the Bri-bris, instead of building the house in a circular form, it is elongated and has a ridge-pole, but the ends are rounded, and the door is in one of the ends.

Formerly the Cabecar houses were built in the same style; but now most of them are mere sheds, sloping to one side only and open at the ends and in front. The most pretentious house I saw in Cabecar was a roof sloping to both sides from a ridge pole to the ground, but open at both ends. The Tiribi houses are simply a roof raised on short posts, sloping both ways from the ridge but open all around below. Mr. Lyon told me that formerly the Tiribis as well as the Cabecars had round houses like the Bri-bris, but that the present style is due only to carelessness. The tribes are dwindling so rapidly that they seem to have lost heart even in so important a thing as building comfortable houses; and are content to put up with any make-shift that will shelter them from the weather. The Bri-bri houses are not only better constructed but are much better furnished than those of their neighbors. Beds are placed around the house
352 in the space between the posts and the sloping sides. These are made by planting in the ground two sticks, forked at the upper ends; cross-sticks are laid on these, the other ends being lashed with vines to the sloping rafters. Over these two horizontal sticks are placed boards made of the outer shell of a species of palm; or wild cane is lashed close together. In front of the beds are slung hammocks, between the posts, or to the ends of horizontal sticks projecting a little beyond them. The fire is placed
354 opposite the door near the back side of the house. It is kept up by placing close together, the ends of three large logs which are pushed up as they burn off. Over the fire is a barbacue or frame, sufficiently high to let people pass under it. On it is placed food to keep it out of the way of the dogs, pigs, chickens, and ants. The smoke of the fire is sufficient protection from the latter

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

tween floor and earth being used as a pig-pen or a chicken-pen,] while the Indians place their hammocks near the fire at the floorless end of the dwelling. /

/ This floorless end of the lodge frequently has a small, quadrangular enclosure made of small sticks lashed together, in which are kept [the culinary utensils, especially the great, pointed-based, pottery chicha jars, which are tied to the side-posts of the pen and are propped with stones to keep them upright (fig. 1). [The floor here is also cumbered with the firelogs, radiating like the spokes of a wheel, with the fire at the middle.] [Calabashes for water or for the preparation of cacao] lie without order on the ground. Generally in this quarter one may see also [the great, flat-topped, natural, river bowlder (which takes the place of the old-time carved stone metate), and the round pebble which serves as a mano]\ One such large bowlder, possibly a drift rock, was seen in the middle of a trail, well out in the jungle and far from any habitation. The Bribri women still went there to grind their corn, for on several occasions traces

342 [231] [415] [354] [415] 412

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

412 of fresh meal were seen on its surface. A similar bowlder mortar may be seen in the foreground in pl. 1.

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417

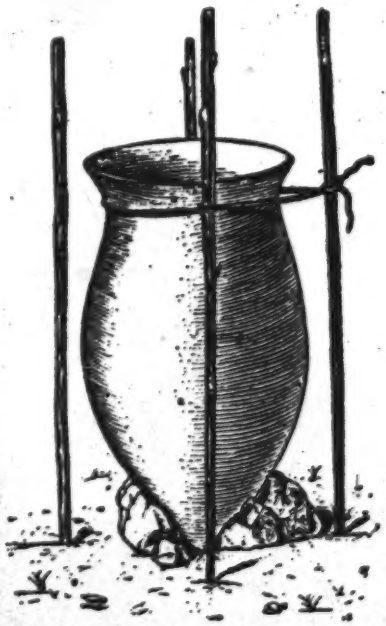


FIG. 1.—Method of supporting a chicha jar.

342
352
354 In the two circular houses of chiefs that still remained, the arrangement of household furnishings was more promiscuous, but in

2;Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

both cases the fireplace was opposite the door, near the side, and not in the middle. 942 352 [354]

From the beams and the roof of the ordinary Bribri house are suspended carrying bags and baskets in which are stored calabashes and other utensils, while bows, arrows, and blowguns are held in crude racks or stuck in the thatch. Under the angle of the roof is often a rude attic, made of rough-hewn plank flooring, on which rests one or more great, cylindrical, corn receptacles, or granaries, of bark, and nearby one is likely to see a string or two of braided corn.

Sometimes a long, goblet-shaped, wooden drum, with an iguana-skin head, a number of circular pieces of iguana-skin for fresh drum-heads, or a cluster of several drums, may swing from a rafter at one side; or one may observe plumes of macaws, and the paws, flesh, or skin of jaguars and armadillos, hanging freely or tucked in a woven *chákara*, or bag, to be used as medicine. Again, but rarely, these may be accompanied with a shaman's small gourd rattle with a bone handle. Tame parrots, parra- 352 534 000

342 824 used to level off the roof and to make an even finish. The third grass is thin and fine, and is called *zacate de palito*, in Spanish ("little stick grass") or *su* in Boruca. This is supposed to protect against and to stop cracks.

The Indians pull up these grasses, roots and all, and gather them in bundles which they tie with a vine or pieces of the grass itself. 342 [492 493] They put these rolls on an ox or on their own backs and take them to the building site (see fig. 7, *a*). As many as twenty-seven hundred rolls or bundles of grass are needed for an average roof. If the grass gets wet, each roll is opened and laid in the sun to dry. When ready to use, the grass is placed between one or two of the narrower horizontal poles of the roof forming a neat row. It is not tied, but is literally wedged-in. A roof usually has from six to nine horizontal rows of grass.

The interior of the houses varies. Some have two partitions made of *caña blanca* (see p. 8) or even of thin *palo de mayo* poles, following the same construction as the outer walls, at times, even with a smattering of *bajareque*. When a house is so divided, one room is used for the kitchen, one for a sleeping room, and one for a living room. Occasionally, a little hallway results in this type of house. However, the hallway is only the result of the partitions and is not an architectural feature. The average house, however, has only one partition, usually of canes, which sets off the kitchen.

● 354 **Household Furniture.** Many of the *Boruca* have, in addition to the three hearth stones (see p. 8), a *fogón*, or stove, built in the typical *ladino* fashion. This *fogón* is a raised wooden container, rectangular in shape, and supported by four wooden legs.

The container is filled with mud mixed with pebbles or small pieces of stone and left to dry. When thoroughly dry, three or more stones are placed on top to support the cooking vessels. Sticks of wood are placed between these stones and set on fire for cooking. At times small rounded mud ovens are also made on the *fogón*.

352 The *tabanco*, or wooden platform, is an important feature of a Boruca house. The *tabancos* are usually made of the stilt or black palms called in Spanish *chonta*, or *chonta negra*. There are two kinds of *chonta*. Both have

HOUSES

342 has been a long contact with the United Fruit
[177] Company. The usual Company house was raised with a *corredor* encircling from a quarter to a half of the upper portion. The Bribri house is high off the ground and consequently dry, airy, and light. There is a large
[354] porch where the cooking is done on a raised hearth; where babies and children play without crawling in the mud or mingling with the
[574] pigs; and where people can sit and have social visits. The sleeping quarters are concentrated on one side and are separated by stilt palm walls. To make such a structure, the tree is cut into the length desired for the walls and the inside pulp is removed with a machete.
[824] Vines are employed for fastening the logs together (fig. 6, *c*). These houses are known to last for ten years. The roofs have a six-year duration.

In addition to this, there is a less elaborate house which is more often seen in the vicinity of the non-indigenous settlements. This type is also rectangular. It consists of a leaf roof,
[824] either of palm or *platanillo* (*Cruciferae* sp.), supported by wooden posts without walls. It occurs in various sizes from that suitable for a monogamous family to one capable of housing more than a single wife.

On the southern slope of the range, one sees a vestige of the circular dwelling, especially among the more conservative Cabécares, in an occasional rectangular house with one rounded side (fig. 7, *a*). The circular and communal house is rare in spite of the fact that it is not
[591] unusual for several families related matrilineally to inhabit the same building. The general custom here is for the son to take his bride to his father's house until he can afford one of his own. Mud plastering is frequently applied to the exterior walls as a protection
[177] against wind. This is a custom borrowed from the Chiricanos of Buenos Aires (fig. 7, *a–b*). Both rectangular wooden rod and cane houses with palm-leaf roofs (figs. 7, *c*; 8, *d*), as a rule
[824] the common stilt palm (*Socratea durissima* Wendl.) known as *caarka* in Cabécar, and plank houses with the same roofing or even aluminum sheeting are seen. Fences are used
[351] in Ujarrás around vegetable gardens. They are made of closely placed posts tied with vines. In Salitre, some barbed wire fences are seen in the vicinity of the school.

354 **Furnishings.** In Talamanca, Chirripó, and Cabagra the hearth is made by placing tree trunks on the dirt floor with their ends together. The fire is kept going continuously and is not extinguished but covered with ashes when the family leave. During the night, someone shoves a trunk nearer to the center as it burns. In the large houses of the Bribri, there is a hearth for each wife (figs. 4, *c*; 6, *d*). This [252] is where she cooks for herself and her children as well as her husband. No house was seen with more than two hearths among the Cabécares (fig. 4, *d*). Over these fires wooden rods are suspended from the roof beams by pieces of *burío* (*Tiliaceae* sp., *see* Fibers). From these 251 rods hangs whatever needs drying, such as meat, seeds (usually in white *bijagua* leaves but occasionally in corn shucks), salt in black [824] *bijagua* (*Calathea* spp.) leaves, cacao pods for planting, plantains or bananas for ripening, 231 etc. A piece of hide from cattle or wild game is also hung from one of the rods and is used as food for the ever-present dogs when fresh meat is lacking. Small *bavas*[1] made by men and 415 women from the vine called *kugaca* in Cabécar 824 and *bejuco de hombre* in Spanish, or carrying nets made by women from *guarumo* (*Cecropia* spp.) fiber, are also suspended from the rods. They contain packages of salt wrapped in *bijagua* leaves and cacao pods. Hanging 352 shelves, called in Spanish *tabancos*, are rarely 177 seen in the large house. The fact that in Talamanca there is no word to designate these [192] shelves, other than the Bribri *koŋ*, meaning "place," suggests that here is a borrowed item, probably from the mestizos.

353 In this type of dwelling, the roof beams are important. Almost all things necessary for the family are stuck at random between the rungs of the roof construction or are hung from them (fig. 8, *a–c*). These necessities include food such as grains and fruits; carrying nets containing dried meat and tied tight with the stem of a plantain leaf; sieves made from gourds; forked sticks for lifting cooking ves- [272] sels; sticks with a number of little branches left for stirring chocolate; wooden spoons for stirring; chicken and wild turkey bones; hunting trophies; yeast for chicha wrapped in *bijagua* leaves; net bags with clay for making blow

[192] [1] It is interesting to note that *kaLwa* is the word used in the upper Coen. It has a marked resemblance

1 [i.e. carrying baskets – ANALYST]

nearer to non-Indian habitations, intrusions of other customs are evident. The hearth is sometimes raised and hanging shelves contain gourds, palm-leaf dishes sewn at the ends with vines similar to those of the Panamanian Guaymí, and often one or two knives, forks, plates, cups, etc. A pole with cut-in or notched steps is used for a ladder to reach the mezzanines which are occasionally seen in this type of house. It is significant that the Cabécares, who have had less contact with non-indigenous neighbors in the past, have no word for this ladder or mezzanine.

In the houses nearer to the Talamanca Plain and in the part of Chirripó near Moravia, an oil lamp is occasionally seen hanging by *pita* (agave thread). There is no word for lamp in either Bribri or Cabécar, but in Talamanca, the word for fire is used.

On the Pacific side of the range, at Salitre,
[TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P. 19(B)--ANALYST]

DRESS AND ADORNMENT

Dress. Dress does not ever appear to have formed an important part of Talamanca culture. From the middle of the 17th century to the present, we can trace the use of bark cloth. In this respect, the following commentaries are of interest:

> (the Cabécares) . . . for working and in their houses dress in tree bark called in these lands Mastate, and only to go to mass or when in the presence of the priest do they dress in cotton.[78]
>
> The dresses of the Urinamas, Cavécares, and Talamancas are short jackets, so narrow that they expose all the chest, (made) of tree bark which the Spaniards call *mastate*, and a sash of the same about six fingers wide and a yard and a half long, with which they cover their private parts; the women go about with a skirt of the same and some (are) of cotton which they tie (reaching) from the waist to the knees. . . .[79]

[TEXT CONTINUES BOTTOM OF P. 19(B)-ANALYST]

[78] Fernández, 1907, vol. IX, p. 501. ". . . y es de advertir que para sus trabajos y vivir en sus casas se visten de Cáscaras de palo llamado en estas tierras Mastate, y sólo para ir á Misa ó ponerse en la presencia del Padre se visten de algodón."

[79] Fernández, 1886, vol. V, p. 373. "Los vestidos de Urinamas, Cavécares y Talamancas son unas almillas cortas y tan angostas que descubren todo el pecho, de corteza de árbol que llaman los españoles *mastate*, y una banda de lo mismo como de seis dedos de ancha

Ujarrás, and China Kichá, the hearth is more often constructed of clay on a wooden table. Here wooden beds and mezzanines made of wooden rods are used for sleeping along with hammocks. Plates, spoons, cups, etc., are seen in every household although their number is limited according to the family purse. The low stool is always present but a chair and a table are found now and then. Hanging shelves serve for storing food and all manner of odds and ends. Yeast for chicha, generally wrapped in *bijagua* leaves, is hung on the wall posts. The fondness for decorating the wall with feathers, eggshells, bones, and skins, however, remains the same as on the Caribbean side. Attached to the exterior of the house are hen's nests made of vine baskets or *havas*, a wild plant or orchid, and generally a piece of tree trunk containing wild bees.

DRESS AND ADORNMENT

An early report concerning the expedition of Fray Margil to the Province of Talamanca states:

> Their dress is very poor, because the men (are dressed) with their cloth of skins, and the women with their short cloths, and those who do not have them, with plantain leaves appear as contented as the best dressed Spaniards.[80]

Today, bark cloth (*see* Manufactures and Trade), still called *mastate* in Spanish, is used in upper Talamanca and upper Chirripó as shirts or Mother Hubbards, as loin cloths, and as bed covering. In the rest of the area inhabited by the Talamancas, it is only used as blankets. Sewing is done by both men and women but chiefly by the men.

The ordinary woman's garment consists of

y vara y medio de largo, con que cubren las partes de honestidad; las mujeres andan con una manta de lo mismo y algunas de algodón que la atan desde la cintura a las rodillas. . . ."

[80] De Espinosa, 1742, p. 64. "Su vestir es pobrisimo, porq los hombres con sus cendales de pieles, y las mujeres con sus pañalitos cortos, y las que no los tienen, con hojas de platanos se hallan tan contentos como los mas bien vestidos Españoles."

501 *cardium rhinocarupus* D.C.) and *ceiba* (*Ceiba*
[824] *pentandra* Gaertn.) are the favorite materials.
[137] The plain of the Sixaola has long been cut
over and these woods are found in the deep
396 forest. The Bribri select the tree and fell it,
fashioning the dugout at the spot and carrying
it to a waterway. It often takes as long as three
days to transport the dugout from the place
of manufacture to a waterway. In making the
boat, the center of the log is burned and the
rest is cut out with machete and axe.

237 **Bone.** Monkey and deer bones are made into
needles (*see* Nets). The leg bone of the wild
turkey (*Penelope purpurascens* Wagl.) is cut
at the top of the joint and is utilized for round-
ing the pellets of the blow gun. Deer bones
are made into handles for rattles and fastened
with *pita*.

412 **Needles and Beads.** *Pejibaye* thorns are used
as well as bone for needles. Beads are fashioned
301 from animal teeth (*see* Dress and Adornment),
stones, shells, and seeds. The holes in all of
these are made with an arrowhead or a fine
pejibaye stick, sand, and water. On the Pacific
432 side, needles are almost always bought.

237 **Wax.** Beeswax has varied uses. The two
[411] most important ones are for fastening on the
[354] sights of blow guns and for holding the shafts
of lances and arrows in place. At times, wax
is made into candles. It is very popular as an
article of trade.

354 **Light.** Candles are made from the white and
824 red *higuerilla*. When dry, the seeds are placed
on top of each other and a stick is run through
the center. In Chirripó, a piece of cotton is
used as a wick in beeswax. The resin from
copal (*Protium copal* Engl.) also serves as a
light, as well as the sap of the red *mastate*.

237 **Feathers.** Bright feathers are used for adorn-
[301] ment both on the house walls and as head-
[372] dresses or around the neck. Tail feathers
and/or wings of wild turkeys are generally
used as fans for the fire.

388 **Soap.** The leaves and fruit of the *guanacaste*
824 tree (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum* Griseb.) are
boiled to make soap.

[P 45(A)] SA19 Talamanca SA19 Bribri Cabecar

756 the largest stone on the bench. Most of the songs referred to certain birds in the woodland. As the aspirant cannot touch the stones until they have been put into his hands, each medicine man took the stones from the center and placed them in the hands of the novice.

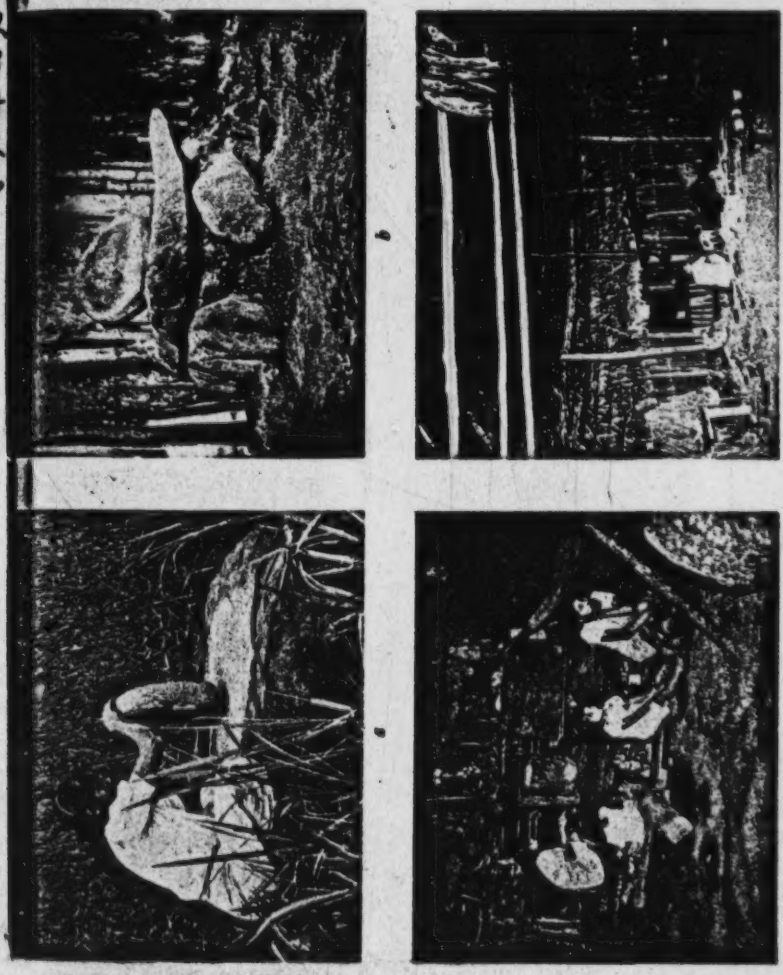
●[354] It was quite dark, so the first wife made a candle from beeswax, rolling it long, and tore a strip of cloth to wrap around it. When finished, it appeared very much like a licorice whip. She put this candle on the side of the bench so that it lit up everything on it.

The aspirant had had to fast all day within his room. Now two ears of white maize and one raw palmito (which is white) was put inside the room for later use.

At 2:45 A.M. the same ceremony with first chocolate and then chicha was held. This must be done four times during the night. The [80] number four is bound up with all semireligious acts as it is intimately connected with certain histories of *sibu* (*see* Legends). The head man put two pieces of cotton on top of a carrying bag. Then all went to the kitchen house and brought back a white chicken and a white rooster saying, "We are going to serve the feast" to each person. The witnesses answered, "Good." An iron pot containing bananas and palmito was brought in and the same statements were repeated. The first wife took another bundle of leaves from the *tabanco* and the women served rice and chicken in them. Again there followed the ceremony of the cup being changed from left to right.

At 4:00 A.M., two medicine men, including the chief one, went to the kitchen house with the novice, taking some *aik* leaves. They were followed by the first wife carrying a sick child. This was one of the important steps in the initiation because it showed the aspirant how to go about curing an ill person. The head medicine man took the novice by the hand and together they drew the leaves over the fire so as to soften but not burn them. They fanned the child with the leaves. During this process there was not a whimper from the patient. This was done four times and then the novice repeated it four times alone. The chief man stayed beside the pupil, however, and warned him not to burn the leaves. When [78] they crackled and popped as they were being drawn over the fire, it was considered a good

6: Stone E-5 (1956-1959) 1962 SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri
Cabecar



4, Natural resting stone in a stream. b, Natural resting stone in a house. c, One of four hearths within a Bribri round house, Talamanca. d, One of two hearths within a Cabécar round house, Talamanca.

[END PLATE 3]

6: Stone E-5 (1956-1959) 1962 SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri
Cabecar

342
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285

a

b

342
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c

d

a-b, Preparing palm leaves for roofing, Talamanca. c, Detail of vine tying used in Bribri construction. d, One of four booths within a Bribri house, Talamanca.

[END PLATE 5]